8: Lužbetak E-4 (no date) 1951 RHI Caucasia RHI

As soon as the procession reaches the bridegroom's house, his mother takes a plate of honey and smears some on the bride's lips and extends her an official invitation to enter.[51] The honey symbolizes the readiness of the mother-in-law to offer the bride any and every gift, but especially the greatest gift of all, entrance into the household.[52] A pleasant and sweet life awaits her in such friendly surroundings.

Now an ox (or any other head of large cattle)[53] is led before the bride. The ear of the animal is then cut as a sign that from now on it belongs to the bride alone.[54] If the bride stands motionless in the doorway, everyone understands that the bride is still not satisfied and therefore a second animal must be brought before her and its ear must be cut in a similar manner. Sometimes a horse is presented to her instead of two oxen, in which case a clump of hair is cut off the horse's tail, leaving the ear intact.[55] On accepting these gifts, the bride is congratulated, welcomed, honoured with songs and pistol shots, and is then solemnly led across the threshold of the *saklia* by her mother-in-law. Sometimes, as the bride steps over the threshold, the bridegroom, standing behind the door, gives his wife three slight strokes[56] symbolizing his authority over her.[57]

The programme now calls for a tug of war between the villagers and the members of the groom's household. A carpet (the one the bride stepped on when crossing the threshold) is placed between the two groups, everyone taking as good a hold of it as possible and then pulling with all his strength, the villagers pulling away from the house and the others toward it. This is, doubtless, a form of ceremonial bride capture. The winners receive a special delicasy called *airisa*, a mixture of flour, butter and honey, as well as their favourite drink *buza*, while the losers must be satisfied with the drink.[58]

There are two other forms of ceremonial bride capture, found among other Lesghians. In Dido-land the friends of the groom "break" into the bride's house, throw a sheep-skin over her head, and drag her into the street, where the villagers throw filth at her till she reaches her new home. The Andi of T'indi are supposed to have had the following custom: the bride riding on a horse, accompanied by men and women armed with torches and long poles, rides toward the groom who is similarly guarded. When the two groups meet, a mock battle is declared. The parties must try to extinguish each other's torches. In

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[51] Kovalevskij, *l. c.* Amirov omits this ceremony.

[52] This is Kovalevskij's interpretation. Unfortunately our sources fail to mention whether the mother-in-law accompanies her action with words as in the case of other North Caucasians or not.

[53] Amirov, *op. cit.*, p. 31, who mentions the possibility of presenting a horse instead of two oxen.

[54] Kovalevskij, *l. c.*; Amirov, *l. c.*

[55] Amirov, *l. c.*

[56] Kovalevskij, *Zakon*, II, p. 186.

[57] Amirov's and Kovalevskij's interpretation.

[58] Amirov, *op. cit.*, pp. 31 f.

FOOD

C. G. 262 The basic food of the average Caucasian consists of various kinds of home-baked bread and cakes, milk (often used sour), diverse kinds of cheese, rice, onions and garlic, cucumbers, melons, etc. Very common is also the use of a thick gruel (R. mamalyga) prepared out of millet, corn or wheat. A common Georgian dish, which spread also to N. W. Caucasus, is the lobia, made out of cooked and mashed beans with shredded onions and aromatic herbs; the same is true of the Georgian kharcho, a meat-sauce with nuts. The Circassians prepare a special dish of chicken in a gravy of butter, aromatic herbs and pepper. The main warm dish in Dagestan consists of noodles (cut of various kinds of dough) cooked in water, drained, and flavored with cheese, garlic, or other condiments. Meat is eaten mostly on special occasions; an all-Caucasian dish is mutton roasted on the spit (R. shashlyk); the Persian pilaw, rice cooked with meat and flavored with spices, has also found widespread popularity in the Caucasus. The Georgians in the lowland drink wine, the Tush, Pshav and Khevsur brew beer (as do the Ossetes); the Circassians prepare a beverage out of millet to which, after fermentation, honey is added (R. buza).

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